

TIPS FOR A SABBATH DATE WITH JESUS

THERE IS NO GREATER DIGNITY BESTOWED ON HUMAN beings than the fact that the Creator of the universe desires a relationship with us: He actually enjoys spending time with us! In fact, God is speaking to us all the time. However, we are not always listening.

More and more, our culture is conditioning us to crave noise, busyness, and entertainment—anything to distract us from nurturing our relationship with God. So before we are able to listen, we need to be able to hear, and before we can hear, we need to be silent. And before we can be silent, we need to remove ourselves from the distractions of the world.

It was quite some time before I developed the habit of setting aside time each week to spend with God (which also required adjusting some priorities), but once I did, it changed everything. Whether you already plan a weekly time with the Lord and are simply looking for some fresh ideas, or you want to begin making this a new practice, these are some tips that will help you get started.

What you'll need: Bible, pen, prayer journal, blank paper or notebook, worship music, favorite drink or snack, tissues, comfortable chair or cushion.

Where to go: a local park, library, coffee shop, your backyard, beach, state park or trails, local retreat centers (you'd be surprised how many there are!), your living room (when I stay home, I will often set up a YouTube video of a fireplace, campfire, or calm ocean waves to create atmosphere where there otherwise is none).

Planning around children's or others' schedules: If your current schedule doesn't allow you to set aside a full day, begin with a half-day or even one to two hours. If you have small children, consider arranging with your spouse or another parent to alternate spending a few hours alone with the Lord and then a few hours watching the children.



One friend who had a husband, job, and house full of children realized that the best solution for her was to leave home early on Saturday mornings and spend time with the Lord at a coffee shop. She could only go for one or two hours, but she confessed that it had become her most sacred hours of the week.

The key is to try different things until you find what works. God knows your heart, and He knows the challenges you face. Meet Him where you are, and let it grow from there.

What to do: There are numerous helpful outlines available to plan your time with the Lord; however, the key is to remember that these are merely tools. Ultimately, you want the Holy Spirit to be your guide. He may have His own agenda, such as healing an old wound, inviting you to cast your burdens on Him, or simply resting in His presence. At the same time, come prepared with your needs. He is your loving Father who cares for you. You may need to forgive someone, or perhaps God has been convicting you about something, or you might simply need His guidance. The key is to be intentional. The saying “If you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it” holds true even in our walk with God. The simple outline that follows is one that I adapted from a class I took while at seminary. Unlike the outline that I use periodically in my morning quiet times,¹ I prefer this outline for more strategic prayer.

Prepare the night before by praying and asking God to bless the time you have committed to Him. Plan to divide your time (four hours is recommended) into quarters and dedicate each quarter to one of the following steps.

Solitude and Meditation: Take this time to clear your mind and heart and to focus on God.

- Consider starting your time by taking a walk, reading a psalm, or meditating on God’s attributes.

Confession: Ask yourself what grieves God, why it grieves Him, and why it matters.

- Record in your journal what God reveals. Use your blank paper or notebook to record any action steps God lays on your heart.

Personal Prayer: Share your dreams, fears, and concerns with God.

- Open your heart and invite Him into your deepest thoughts.

Strategic Prayer: Seek God’s counsel for specific questions, or ask for guidance in your areas of responsibility, such as at home, at work, or in ministry.

- Where do you need wisdom?
- Record any action steps in your notebook.

The beauty of meeting with God is that He is always willing to meet us where we are. Trust Him in this and He will honor your commitment. “The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD” (Lam. 3:25–26).



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Shadia Hrichi is a passionate Bible teacher, multi-award-winning author, and speaker who has a heart for seeing lives transformed by the power of God's Word. She holds a master's in biblical and theological studies as well as a master's in criminal justice. Shadia is the author of several Bible studies, including *Ruth*, *Rahab*, *Tamar*, *Hagar*, and *Worthy of Love*. She is often invited to speak at churches, conferences, and retreats and to serve on faculty for various Christian Writers conferences. Currently residing in northern California, Shadia loves to visit the ocean each week for “a date with Jesus.” To learn more about Shadia and the video teaching sessions available for the Behind the Seen series, visit www.shadiahrichi.com.


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